

**SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
MINUTES
SGRC OFFICE • 1725 S. GEORGIA PARKWAY, WEST • WAYCROSS, GA
SEPTEMBER 28, 2023
11:00 a.m.**

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME: Chair Lee Gowen called the meeting to order and welcomed members and guests.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Chair Gowen asked Barbara King to give the invocation, and then led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

<u>Atkinson County</u>	<u>Bacon County</u>	<u>Ben Hill County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Liles, Parker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Taylor, Shane	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Taylor, Steve
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Robert Johnson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Taylor, Larry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Holt, Jason
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stone, Robbie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ellis, Kevin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dunn, Jason
<u>Berrien County</u>	<u>Brantley County</u>	<u>Brooks County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Griner, Robert	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Harris, Skipper	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Folsom, Patrick
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brown, Travis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maefield, Barbara	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Morgan, Don
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Smart, Lisa	Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deshazior, Zurich
<u>Charlton County</u>	<u>Clinch County</u>	<u>Coffee County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Everett, James	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moylan, Henry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> O'Steen, Ted
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gowen, Lee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hardee, Willie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paulk, Tony
Vacant	Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Smith, Adam
<u>Cook County</u>	<u>Echols County</u>	<u>Irwin County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Robinson-McKenna, Debra	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Corbett, Stanley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carver, Scott
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Duke, Buddy		Vacant
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bennett, Derry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Garner, Cheryl	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MacKenzie, Mona
<u>Lanier County</u>	<u>Lowndes County</u>	<u>Pierce County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fender, Dennis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Evans, Joyce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bennett, Neal
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Darsey, Bill	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Miller-Cody, Vivian	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brooks, Keith
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Barnes, James	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Payton, Anthony	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paul, Steven
<u>Tift County</u>	<u>Turner County</u>	<u>Ware County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> McBrayer, Tony	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Whiddon, Dana	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thrift, Elmer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Smith, Julie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lumpkin, Sandra	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> James, Michael-Angelo
Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Giddens, Brandi	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> King, Barbara
<u>Governor's Office</u>	<u>Lt. Governor's Office</u>	<u>Speaker's Office</u>
Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stone, Keith	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Seale, Matt

Vacant		
Vacant		

Staff Present

Courson, Scott
Cribb, Lisa
Hobbs, Kimberly
Horton, James
Lovett, Roberta
Strom, Chris
Strom, Rachel
Vining, Kim
Wilcher, Lance

Guests Present

Cason, Joey
Chriszt, Mike
Culberson, Mae
Rivers, Adrian
Wilson, Charles

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AUGUST 24, 2023 COUNCIL MEETING:

Chair Gowen reminded those present that the August 24, 2023 council meeting minutes were emailed to members for their review (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Barbara Mae field made a motion to accept the minutes, and Barbara King seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF JULY AND AUGUST 2023 REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE REPORTS:

Chair Gowen reminded those present that a copy of the July and August 2023 Revenue and Expenditure Reports had been emailed to members (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Barbara Mae field made a motion to accept the July and August 2023 Revenue and Expenditure Reports. Buddy Duke seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

U.S. ECONOMIC OUTLOOK:

Chair Gowen asked SGRC Assistant Executive Director Chris Strom to introduce Michael Chriszt, VP and Regional Engagement Officer with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, to the council. Mr. Chriszt presented a PowerPoint presentation on the U.S. Economic Outlook from his view of this year's trends (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). He briefly overviewed the Federal Reserve Bank's (FRB) history. The FRB is not part of the government. It is separate and meant to ensure that the central bank's decisions are not dominated by the country's political center in Washington, DC, nor by the financial capital in New York City. There are twelve branches around the U.S., with one in Atlanta, and they are apolitical, nonpartisan and independent organizations. The Federal Reserve has two main jobs when it comes to the economy, and this is known as its dual mandate. Congress established maximum employment and price stability as the economic objectives of the Federal Reserve. Mr. Chriszt also discussed the inflation rate and shared how the Federal Reserve considers and looks at several different inflation measures to gauge its current tracking. He stated that the interest rate is in a downtrend, so it is headed in the right direction. Mr. Chriszt also shared that the inflation rate has risen from near zero to around five and a half percent since coming out of the pandemic. He then concluded his presentation by answering questions from the audience.

LENDING DIVISION ANNUAL REPORT FOR FY2023: Chair Gowen called SGRC Lending Program Director Lance Wilcher to present the Lending Program Activities and the Annual

Report for FY2023. Mr. Wilcher referred those present to the 2023 Loan Program Annual Report in their packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). He stated that for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2023, the loan program closed eleven loans totaling \$17,684,673, of which \$6,022,615 was the SGRC's portion of loans. There were 129 jobs created or retained. Mr. Wilcher also reviewed specifics such as the type and location of the businesses assisted, the types of loans and the participating banks. Mr. Wilcher then concluded his report by reviewing the lending activities of the Southern Georgia loan program since its inception. After Mr. Wilcher answered questions from the audience, Chair Gowen called for a motion to Approve the FY2023 Lending Annual Report. Barbara King made a motion to Approve the FY2023 Lending Annual Report. Barbara Mae field seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

REAPPOINTMENT OF LOAN PROGRAM BOARD MEMBERS: Mr. Wilcher referred those present to a current Loan Board of Directors listing in their member packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). He then reviewed the loan board composition requirements. Mr. Wilcher asked if there were any questions. There being none, Chair Gowen called for a motion to Reappoint the Loan Program Board Members. Barbara King made a motion to Reappoint the Loan Program Board Members. Buddy Duke seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES/UPDATES:

GIS Role During Hurricane Idalia: SGRC GIS Director Rachel Strom shared with the council how the SGRC GIS department helped communities during Hurricane Idalia. Ms. Strom stated that leading up to the storm, the GIS team contacted the local Emergency Management Agency (EMA) directors and asked how they could help. During Hurricane Idalia, the SGRC GIS team started when they heard the news that the storm would hit Lowndes County, and they convened at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) before the hurricane to be ready for what would come. Ms. Strom said the GIS team was busy providing real-time mapping of any down trees and downed power lines that were reported to keep the community up to date. Also, during the storm, GIS team members were taking calls from other SGRC's region EMA directors. She shared that they also had a request for Drone Services to take pictures of the lineman who came into the area to get power back on as soon as possible. Ms. Strom ended her experience by stating that the SGRC GIS team is ready to help our communities when something happens and when other services are requested.

Grants: SGRC Deputy Executive of Director of Governmental Services Kimberly Hobbs directed council members to the project status list in their packets (copy attached and made part of these minutes). Ms. Hobbs stated that the list includes the status of current projects the Community & Economic Development department has in progress. She shared that a new industry received a \$2.3 million Georgia Workforce Housing award for the City of Douglas and Coffee County Development Authority. Also, all four CDBG applications the SGRC submitted were awarded – for the City of Nashville, Ben-Hill Co., Pierce Co. and Ware Co. She shared that the CDBG Recipients Workshop would be held October 25th and 26th in Augusta. The DCA CDBG Application Workshop will be held in December, but the date was unavailable during the council meeting. The application data for CDBG's has been moved back to April 1st, starting in 2024. Ms. Hobbs also shared that the SGRC region received a OneGeorgia award of \$400,000 for the Valdosta Lowndes Development Authority for infrastructure improvements. She advised those present to contact SGRC Community & Economic Development staff regarding projects listed on the status list or any potential projects they may be interested in for their communities.


Planning: SGRC Planning Director James Horton referred those present to a handout listing the various plans that local governments are required to submit and the deadlines for submission (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Mr. Horton encouraged council members to review the upcoming deadlines for their communities and contact SGRC Planning staff with any questions.

Division Reports: SGRC Executive Director Lisa Cribb referred those present to the division reports in their packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Ms. Cribb asked those present to review the reports to see what the RC is doing in the region each month.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 1.) **Recognition of Guests:** Chair Gowen recognized Adrian Rivers from U.S. Senator Raphael Warnock's office and thanked him for attending the meeting.
- 2.) **Recognition of Representation:** Chair Gowen recognized Bacon, Brantley, Cook, Clinch and Pierce counties for having 100% representation at the council meeting.
- 3.) **ACCG Update:** Joyce Evans stated that the 2023 Legislative Leadership Conference would be held October 11th – 13th at the Jekyll Island Convention Center.
- 4.) **GMA Update:** Barbara Maefield told the council that the GMA Fall District 11 Meeting would be held on October 20th at the Leroy Rogers Senior Center in Tifton, GA.
- 5.) **Area Officials Appreciation Evening:** SGRC Executive Director reminded those present that the Annual Area Officials Appreciation Evening would occur on Wednesday, October 18, 2023. The event would be held at The Farm in Adel, GA, beginning at 5:00 pm.
- 6.) **GARC Annual Conference:** SGRC Executive Director Lisa Cribb shared that the 2023 GARC Annual Conference would be held November 8-10, 2023 at the King and Prince Resort on St. Simons Island (flyer included in council packets). She stated that, as usual, the SGRC would cover the registration fee for any council member and the registration fee plus lodging for any executive committee member. Ms. Cribb asked anyone interested in attending the GARC Annual Conference to contact Kim Vining.

ADJOURN: As there was no further business to conduct, Chair Gowen asked Willie Hardee to bless the meal, and the meeting adjourned.



Lee Gowen, Chair

Keith Stone, Secretary